

DID YOU KNOW...

Every year millions of Americans eat raw molluscan shellfish—especially oysters and clams.

However, for some people, eating raw or undercooked oysters or clams can make you sick from *Vibrio* bacteria.



WHAT IS IT?

Vibrio are bacteria that can cause gastrointestinal illness in people who eat raw or undercooked oysters, clams or other shellfish, regardless of age or health history. Some people with certain health conditions can suffer serious illness or even death from a particular kind of *Vibrio* bacteria (*Vibrio vulnificus*).

Between 1989 and 1996, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported 149 serious illnesses resulting in 75 deaths from *Vibrio vulnificus* infection.

WHERE IS IT FOUND?

Vibrio bacteria are found naturally in coastal waters and are NOT a result of pollution. *Vibrio* bacteria can be found in waters approved for oyster and clam harvesting. *Vibrio* bacteria do NOT change the look, taste, or odor of oysters or clams.

During the warm weather months of April through October, amounts of bacteria found in shellfish are higher.

**Thoroughly cooking shellfish
will prevent illness from
Vibrio bacteria.**

HOW CAN YOU BECOME ILL?

You can become ill by eating raw or undercooked oysters or clams. If the oysters or clams are cooked thoroughly, the *Vibrio* bacteria are destroyed and there is no risk of infection.

Eating raw oysters or clams with hot sauce or while drinking alcohol does not destroy the bacteria. Infection can also occur when cuts, burn, or sores come in contact with seawater containing *Vibrio*.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Symptoms of *Vibrio* illnesses include:

- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Stomach pains
- Severe weakness
- Skin rashes and blisters
- Shaking chills
- High fever

It is important to remember that in “high risk” individuals *Vibrio vulnificus* infection can lead to death within two days. If you have any of these symptoms, see your physician immediately for medical treatment.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

If you are at “high risk”:

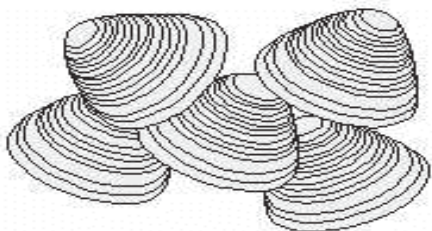
- **NEVER** eat raw shellfish (oysters or clams).
- **ALWAYS** eat oysters and clams that are thoroughly cooked, even when dining out.
- **NEVER** swim or wade in saltwater with open wounds or sores.
- **GET** more information by calling the FDA hotline at 1-800-332-4010, your local health department, or your physician.

WHO IS AT RISK?

One kind of *Vibrio* bacteria (*Vibrio parahaemolyticus*) can cause gastrointestinal illness in people, regardless of age or health history. People with the following health conditions are at risk of serious illness or death from *Vibrio vulnificus*:

- Liver disease
- Excessive alcohol intake
- Diabetes
- AIDS or HIV infection
- Gastric disorders
- Inflammatory bowel disease
- Cancer (including lymphoma, leukemia, Hodgkin's disease)
- Hemochromatosis/hemosiderosis (abnormal iron metabolism)
- Steroid dependency (as used for conditions such as emphysema, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, etc.)
- Any illness or medical treatment which results in a compromised immune system.

Older adults are more likely to have one or more of the above conditions and should be aware of their health status before eating raw oysters or clams.



TIPS FOR COOKING OYSTERS & CLAMS IN THE SHELL

- Use small pots to boil or steam oysters.
- Do not cook too many oysters in the same pot because the ones in the middle may not get fully cooked.
- Boil live oysters in boiling water for 3 to 5 minutes after shells open.
- Steam live oysters 4 to 9 minutes in a steamer that is already steaming.
- Discard any oysters that do not open during cooking.

TIPS FOR COOKING SHUCKED OYSTERS & CLAMS

- Boil or simmer for at least 3 minutes or until edges curl.
- Fry in oil for at least 3 minutes at 375 degrees F.
- Broil 3 inches from heat for 3 minutes.
- Bake for 10 minutes at 450 degrees F.

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THE RISK OF EATING RAW OYSTERS OR CLAMS

